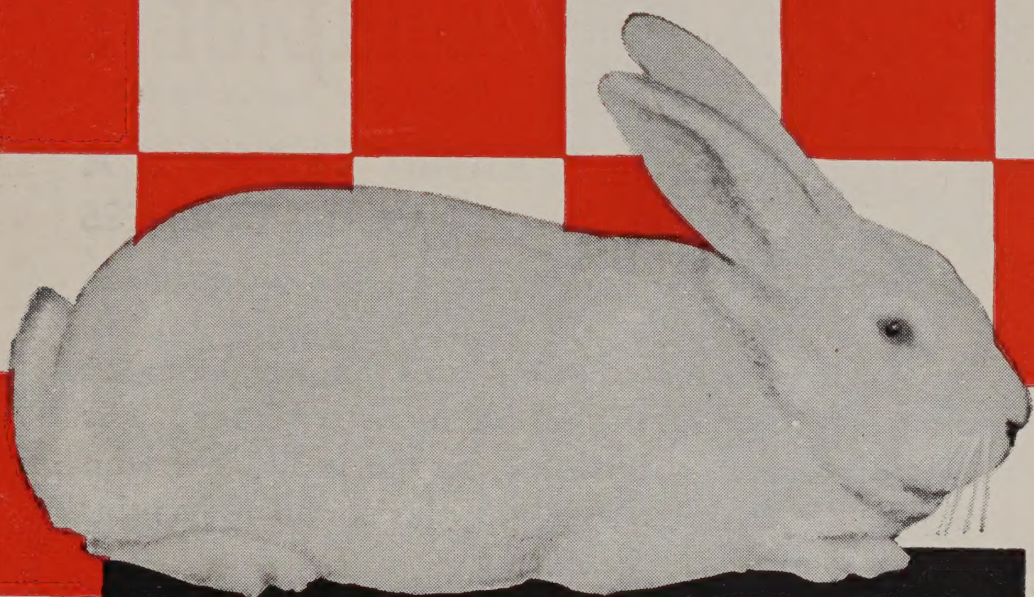




PURINA
RABBIT
BOOK



Chapter I

RABBIT RAISING IS A GOOD BUSINESS

A lot of progress has been made in the past 15 to 20 years in developing the rabbit industry. Today it is a stable commercial business for the individual who will operate his rabbitry along the sound principles of business and management.

Many profitable opportunities are open for both the part-time breeder and the large commercial grower. Raising rabbits for meat, breeding stock, laboratory use, fur, and wool are some of the profitable market opportunities open.

Rabbit raising appeals to the backyard hobbyist because it can be operated in little space and takes a small amount of capital for a start. It is often a profitable side line and is an outdoor activity that is not strenuous. When meat prices are high, home-produced rabbit meat can mean a real savings on the grocery bill. The competition offered by entering rabbit shows proves both fascinating and enjoyable to any sports-minded individual.

The large commercial grower has the opportunity of attempting to supply the growing demand for domestic rabbit meat. While California is a leader in the field when it comes to large-scale rabbit production,

other areas are, and can be, developed into thriving commercial rabbit markets by following modern methods of merchandising and advertising.

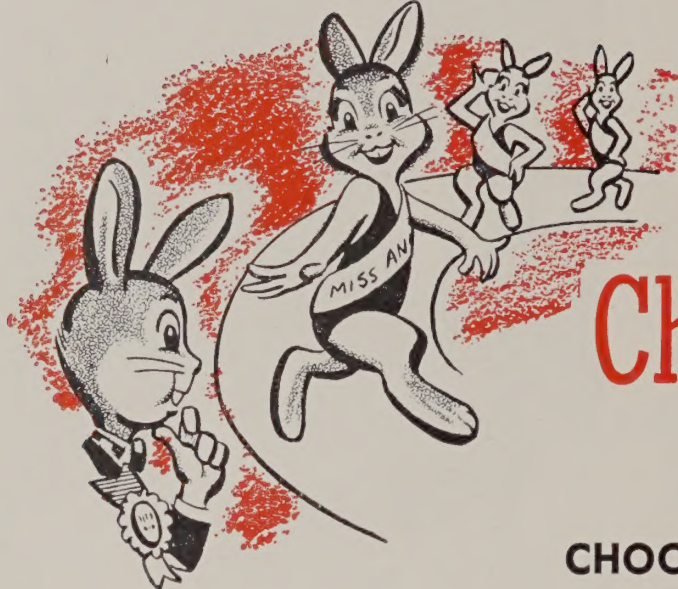
With the improvement of the commercial possibilities of the rabbit industry comes an actual shortage of rabbits to meet the varied market demands.

Don't make the mistake that many an aggressive breeder has in the past of promoting the demand for rabbits in his area only to find later that he is unable to supply his markets. This only destroys the public's faith in both the man and the rabbit industry. The person who increases his markets as he increases his supply of rabbits will be rewarded by a stable and lasting market.

Rabbit raising is no "Get-Rich-Quick" proposition. Its profits are only to be had by the person who works hard at learning the business. The Purina Program for Rabbits—Good Breeding—Good Management—Careful Sanitation—and Good Feeding—stressed throughout this book will be a great help to the rabbit breeder who wants to make a success of rabbit raising and at the same time build for a bigger and better rabbit industry.



Rabbit shows are the show windows of the industry. Here the public becomes acquainted with "King Rabbit" and his many good points.



Chapter II

CHOOSING THE BREED

Perhaps the hardest thing for the beginner to decide is the choice of a breed. If you are just starting you will find it helpful to consult the various breed specialty clubs and the national organization—The American Rabbit and Cavy Breeders Association. Advice and help for the beginner can be obtained from this central organization by writing the secretary, Mr. James Blyth, 4323 Murray Avenue, Pittsburgh 17, Pennsylvania.

The first step in choosing a breed of rabbits to raise is to decide for what purpose you want to raise rabbits; then check the available markets and their demands.

For example, in the case of meat rabbits, some markets want a fryer weighing from 1½ lbs. to 2 lbs. dressed; in which case a breed that develops early and reaches market size quickly is naturally the one to raise.

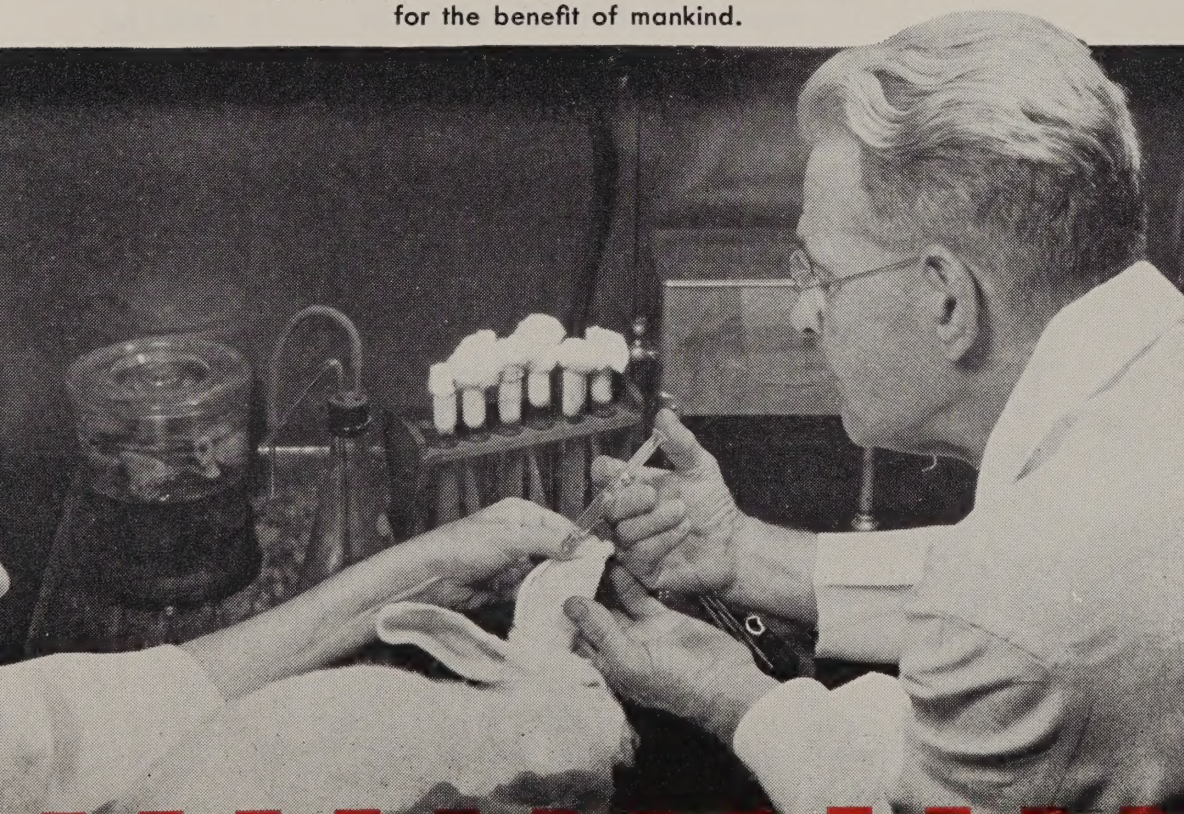
Breed choice can be strictly a matter of fancy if breeding and show stock is to be the main purpose for rabbit raising. However, it would be wise to pick a popular breed if a good breeding-stock market is desired.

Another field of special interest is the production of Angora wool. Anyone desiring a clean-cut, small business requiring small capital and comparatively little time would do well to consider Angoras. The nearest market is the local express or post office.

If you want to raise laboratory stock, find out what types of rabbits the laboratories use. Small breeds are desirable for diagnostic and test work in that they require little space. Larger breeds are more desirable in the production of antisera, vaccines, and drugs.

After a choice of breed has been made, by all means stick with it. Many new rabbit breeders have become discouraged and left the field simply because they were frequently changing breeds—or complicating their job by crossing, only to find later that their efforts were wasted. Choose the breed that will fill your needs. Then put all your efforts in doing a good job of rabbit raising.

Rabbits play an important role in the advancement of science
for the benefit of mankind.



STANDARD BREEDS AND VARIETIES OF RABBITS

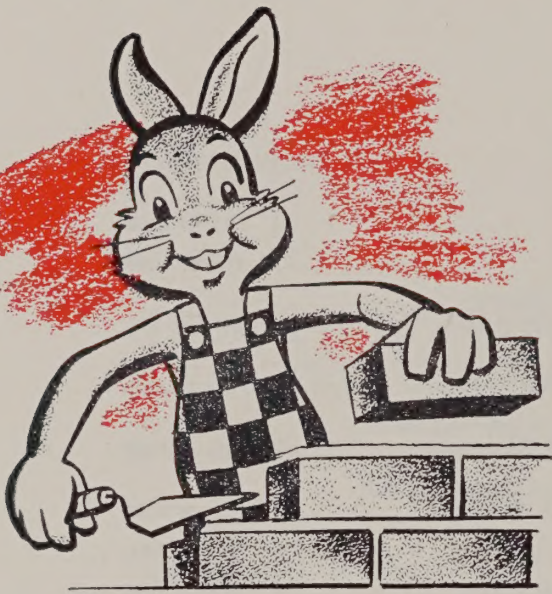
(as recognized by the American Rabbit and Cavy Breeders
Association, and subject to change by the Association)

Ideal Weights		Registration Weights
9 lbs.	American (Blue & White) Bucks	8 to 10 lbs.
10 lbs.	American (Blue & White) Does	9 to 11 lbs.
9 lbs.	American Chinchilla Bucks	8½ to 11 lbs.
10 lbs.	American Chinchilla Does	9 to 12 lbs.
13 lbs. to 14 lbs.	American Giant Chinchilla Bucks	12 to 15 lbs.
14 to 15 lbs.	American Giant Chinchilla Does	13 to 16 lbs.
6½ lbs.	American Standard Chinchilla Bucks	6 to 7½ lbs.
7 lbs.	American Standard Chinchilla Does	6¼ to 8 lbs.
8 lbs.	American Sable Bucks	7 lbs. or over
9 lbs.	American Sable Does	8 lbs. or over
9 lbs.	American Silver Fox (Black & Blue) Bucks	8 to 11 lbs.
10 lbs.	American Silver Fox (Black & Blue) Does	9 to 12 lbs.
6 lbs. or over	Angora Woolers (English) Bucks	5½ to 7½ lbs.
7 lbs. or over	Angora Woolers (English) Does	5½ to 8 lbs.
8 lbs.	Angora Woolers (French) Bucks & Does	7 lbs. or over
8 lbs.	Belgian Hares Bucks & Does	6 to 9 lbs.
9½ lbs. or more	Beveren (Blue & Black) Bucks	7½ lbs. or over
10½ lbs. or over	Beveren (Blue & Black) Does	8½ lbs. or over
9 lbs.	Beveren (White) Bucks	Under 7 lbs. not eligible
10 lbs.	Beveren (White) Does	Under 8 lbs. not eligible
9 lbs.	California Bucks	8 to 10 lbs.
9½ lbs.	California Does	8½ to 10½ lbs.
10 lbs.	Champagne DeArgent Bucks	9 to 11 lbs.
10½ lbs.	Champagne DeArgent Does	9½ to 12 lbs.
8 lbs.	Creme DeArgent Bucks	7 to 9 lbs.
9 lbs.	Creme DeArgent Does	8 to 10 lbs.

Ideal Weights

Registration Weights

11 lbs. or more	Checkered Giant Bucks	10 lbs. or more
12 lbs. or more	Checkered Giant Does	11 lbs. or more
4½ lbs.	Dutch—Black, Blue, Gray, Steel Gray, Tortoise and A.O.C. (Bucks & Does)	Under 3 over 5½ lbs. Not eligible
6 lbs. to 8 lbs.	English (Spots any Color) Bucks & Does	Over 8 lbs. not eligible
14 lbs. or more	Flemish Giant—Steel Gray, Light Gray, Black, Fawn, Sandy Gray, White & Blue Bucks	12 lbs. or over
15 lbs. or more	Flemish Giant—Steel Gray, Light Gray, Black, Fawn, Sandy Gray, White & Blue Does	13 lbs. or over
6 lbs.	Havana Standard Bucks & Does	5 to 7 lbs.
9 lbs. or over	Havana Heavyweight Bucks & Does	7 lbs. or over
3½ lbs.	Himalayan Bucks & Does	2 to 5 lbs.
6½ lbs. to 7 lbs.	Lilac Bucks	5½ to 8½ lbs.
7 lbs. to 7½ lbs.	Lilac Does	6 to 9 lbs.
10 lbs. and over	Lop (English & French) Bucks	Under 9 lbs. not eligible
11 lbs. and over	Lops (English & French) Does	Under 10 lbs. not eligible
10 lbs.	New Zealand (Red & White) Bucks	9 to 11 lbs.
11 lbs.	New Zealand (Red & White) Does	10 to 12 lbs.
2¼ lbs. to 2¾ lbs.	Polish Bucks & Does	Over 3½ lbs. not eligible
5 lbs. to 7 lbs.	Siamese Sable Bucks & Does	5 to 8 lbs.
6 lbs.	Silver (Gray, Fawn & Brown) Bucks & Does	4 to 7 lbs.
7½ lbs.	Silver Marten (Black & Blue) Bucks	6 to 8½ lbs.
8½ lbs.	Silver Marten (Black & Blue) Does	7 to 9½ lbs.
7½ lbs.	Silver Sable Martin Bucks	6 to 8½ lbs.
8½ lbs.	Silver Sable Martin Does	7 to 9½ lbs.
7½ lbs.	Chocolate Martin Bucks	6 to 8½ lbs.
8½ lbs.	Chocolate Martin Does	7 to 9½ lbs.
4 lbs. to 5 lbs.	Tan (Black & Blues) Bucks	4 to 5½ lbs.
4 lbs. to 6 lbs.	Tan (Black & Blues) Does	4 to 6 lbs.
9 lbs. to 10 lbs.	Vienna Blue Bucks	8 to 11 lbs.
10 lbs. to 11 lbs.	Vienna Blue Does	9 to 12 lbs.
Rex	Beaverrex—Blackrex—Bluerex—Castorrex— Chinchillarex—Havanarex—Lilacrex— Lynxrex—Opalrex—Redrex—Sealrex— Siamese Sablerex	Minimum weight for seniors 6 lbs.
Satin Chinchilla	Mature weight	Bucks not under 7 lbs.—Does not under 7½ lbs.
9½ lbs.	White Satin Bucks	8½ lbs. & Up
10 lbs.	White Satin Does	9 lbs. & Up



Chapter III

BUILD FROM A GOOD FOUNDATION

Successful rabbit raising begins with the foundation. You can be the best manager and follow the best feeding program, but if your breeding stock lacks the bred-in ability to pass on desirable characteristics to its offspring, your efforts will be wasted.

There is such a big difference in the breeding stock offered for sale today that no prospective rabbit breeder can afford to take chances on what he buys. It's better to investigate and pay more for good stock today than to shop for bargain prices and be sorry later.

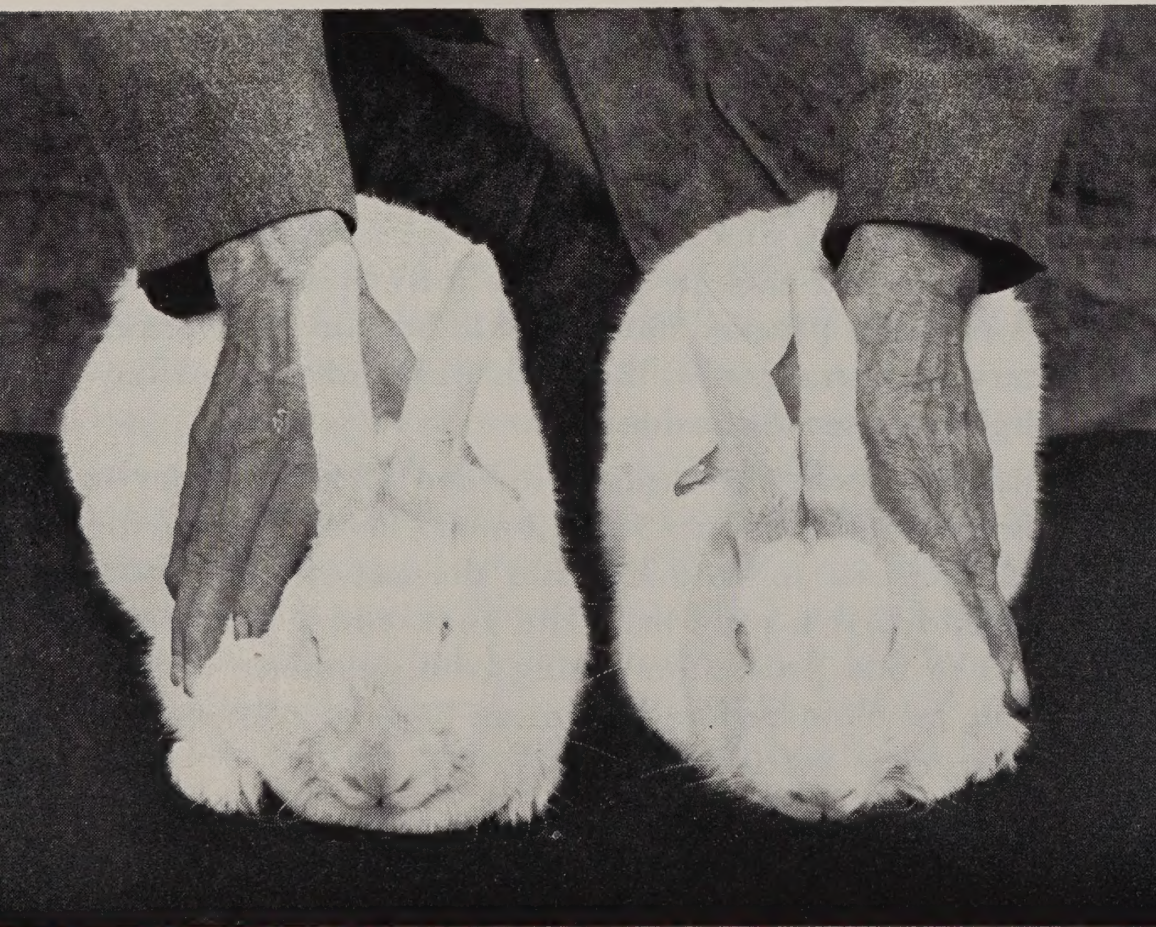
A long string of blue ribbons and a beautiful pedigree are not final deciding factors for determining an animal's worth. Check into the production records of the family. Lastly, look at the pedigree and show winnings.

When selecting your stud buck, remember that he is your most important unit. His characteristics will be passed on to every litter he sires. Be sure he possesses the desirable type for his breed. Check the production records of his brothers and sisters as well as his sire and dam. Vigor and resistance to disease can also be transmitted and are important factors to be considered

in making your selection. The buck has the power to make or break your rabbitry, so select him wisely.

Try to select breeding does from strains of rabbits that have proved their ability to produce big, husky litters with good breed type. The doe should be up to the standard as recognized for her breed, and of even disposition. A good index for her milking ability is her appetite. Good-eating does are usually able to take care of from seven to eight young and to wean them at a satisfactory weight at eight weeks.

You will be well repaid for any time spent in selecting your foundation breeding stock. Investigate thoroughly and insist on getting the best stock for your investment.





Chapter IV

HUTCHES AND EQUIPMENT

Proper housing and good equipment are important for successful rabbit raising. In making plans for your rabbitry, the comfort of your animals and the ease of handling from a management angle should be your major consideration.

THE HUTCH

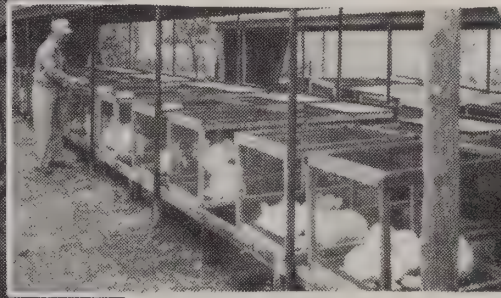
The type of hutches you decide upon will depend on where you live, the breed you raise, and available money for construction.

Poorly built hutches are the most expensive in the long run. It will pay you to start with a good hutch that will give your rabbits good protection from the weather and enough room for growth and exercise. A properly planned hutch should be convenient, sanitary, and arranged so that plenty of fresh air and sunlight reaches the inside.

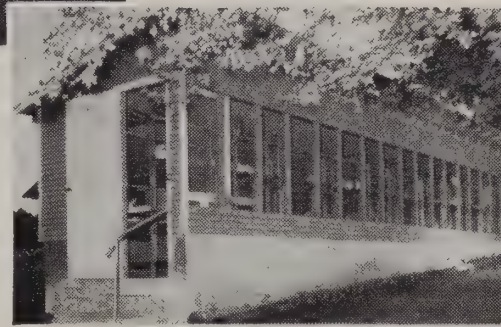
Rabbit hutches are usually divided into two types — indoor and outdoor. The all-metal hutch is ideal for indoor use. In cold climates the out-of-door hutch should have a solid back and ends, and a wire front. For further protection during cold weather a detachable panel or burlap curtain can be used to cover one half of the hutch front.



Developing pens help grow out young rabbits at the Purina Research Rabbitry.

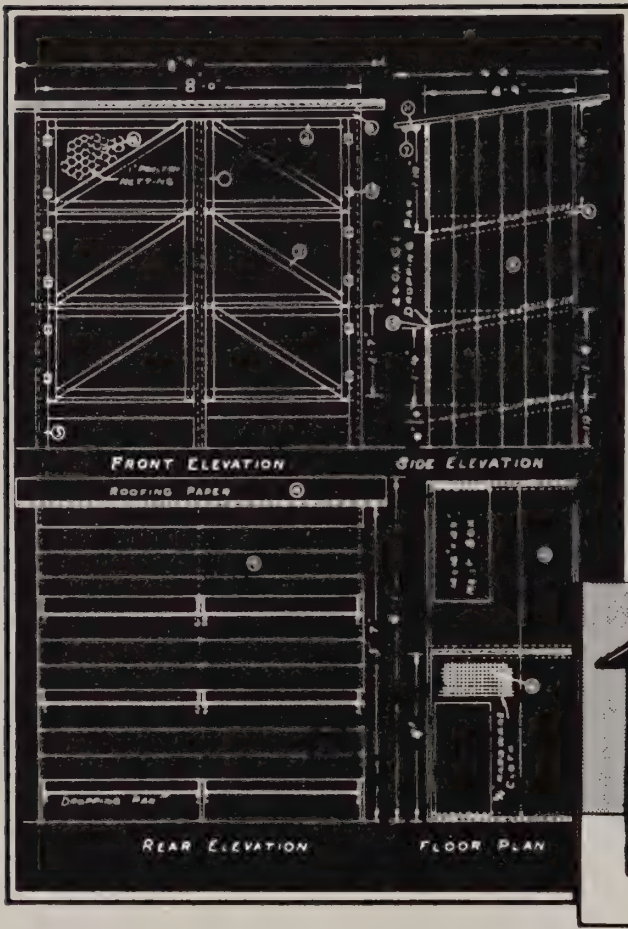


The Purina Research Rabbitry uses two types of breeding hutches. The indoor all-metal type above and the outdoor type shown at the right.

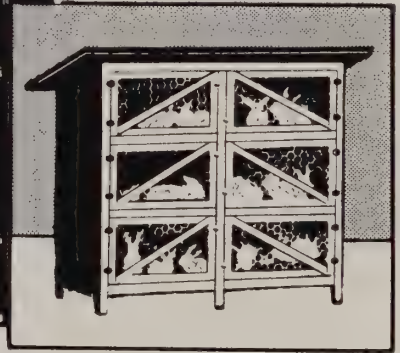


It is easier to keep the hutch clean, dry, and disinfected when $\frac{5}{8}$ " galvanized 16-gauge hardware cloth or 1" metal slats spaced $\frac{1}{2}$ " apart are used for the floors. In the building of double or triple tier hutches, space should be allowed for inserting a dropping tray under the floors of the upper hutches.

Hutch size varies with the breed of rabbits for which they are intended. For the small breeds (3-6 lbs.), a hutch $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, 2 feet high and 3 feet long is adequate for one mature doe or for the doe and her litter. For medium-weight breeds (8-12 lbs.), a hutch of the same depth and height but from 4 to 5 feet long is recommended. Giant breeds (14 lbs. up) should have hutches $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and 6 feet long.



The plan presented here is for a hutch that is practical under ordinary conditions, and economical to build.



NEST BOXES

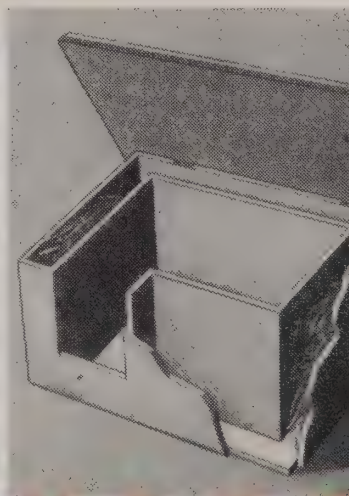
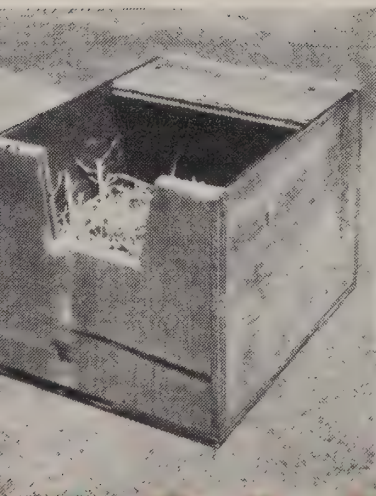
One of the most important pieces of equipment for your rabbitry is the nest box. Paying attention to its proper construction now will save many a litter later. Nest boxes can be made from packing cases or old apple boxes (see picture opposite). A good size is 12" x 12" x 24" with a 7-inch round opening in one end, high enough from the bottom to prevent the little ones from leaving the nest too soon. The box is better with a solid top, hinged so it can be easily opened. Covering the edges of the box with metal strips will prevent the doe from gnawing the box.

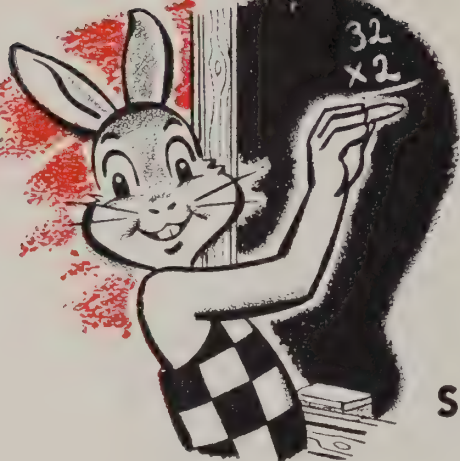
The closed-top nest box is preferable to an open-top box because it prevents the doe from jumping on her young when entering. The top also makes a handy place for the doe to rest when the hutch is being cleaned, or when she wants to get away from her litter. In extremely hot weather the top can be removed.

The loss of new-born rabbits from freezing can be reduced by furnishing the doe with a well-insulated nest box (see picture below). This may be done by placing the standard nest box inside another box large enough to leave a space of 3 inches between the sides and ends of the boxes. Straw and hay may be packed in the provided space for insulation.

Good ventilation is necessary to prevent frost from accumulating in the nest box. This may be provided by boring two or more $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch holes through the center area of the inner box top and through the top of the outer box at the end opposite the entrance opening.

Equipping the nest box (pictured below) with a 25-watt dark-blue light bulb will furnish heat for the new-born rabbits on extremely cold nights and often will be the life-saving factor for the entire litter.





Chapter V

SOUND BREEDING PRACTICES

A successful breeding program depends a lot on the breeding practices used. The following recommendations are made as a result of experimental work which has been conducted at the Purina Research Rabbitry.

HANDLING THE STUD BUCK

As the stud buck is the most influential unit in your rabbitry, handling him properly is a “must” for a sound breeding program. A strong, vigorous mature buck may be used 2 or 3 times a week for brief periods. A buck that is used too often may be ruined as a reliable breeder. His physical condition will influence the health and vitality of his offspring. Bucks that are worn out, in poor condition, or too fat may either go sterile or sire small litters. Keeping your stud bucks in good condition will allow you to receive the full benefit of their breeding value.

Bucks of the small or medium type can be started in service at 6 to 7 months of age and the giant type at 10 months of age. At the Purina Research Rabbitry young New Zealand White (medium type) bucks from 6 to 9 months of age are limited in service to mating 2 does a month. After they are 9 months old they are used, the same as adult bucks, for breeding one doe a week. The usual number of does kept for each buck is 10. Young bucks to be considered for the stud should be

separated and given individual hutches upon reaching the age of 4 months.

It has been proven at the Purina Research Rabbitry that the usual summer breeding failures are often due to sterility of the bucks. By moving bucks to a cool place (average temperature 70-75° F.) before hot weather sets in, summer breeding failures can be reduced.

HANDLING THE BREEDING DOE

Proper handling of the breeding doe and providing a good maternal environment are also necessary for a sound breeding program.

Young does of the small or medium breeds should be bred when around 6 months old, and giant breeds at 8 to 9 months old. However, the growth and development of the individual doe should be the final deciding factor for when to breed. It is often difficult to get a doe to conceive if breeding is delayed too long.

The condition of the breeding doe should be watched closely. Many breeding failures are caused by does being overfat. Fat does are usually lazy breeders and often won't accept the service of the buck at all. Keep your does in good condition of flesh, but be on the lookout for overfatness.

It is a good practice to keep all does, whether young or adult, in separate hutches for at least 18 days before trying to get them to mate. Sexual stimulation may result from one doe riding another, and the doe may develop a case of false pregnancy. The duration of the false pregnancy period is 17 days. During this period the doe will not conceive. If a doe starts pulling fur or building a nest about 18-20 days after mating, it indi-

cates the termination of false pregnancy. She should be rebred immediately.

BREEDING SCHEDULES

Rabbits do not have a regular estrus or heat cycle like most other animals. Therefore, they can be bred at any time. But it should be remembered that the normal breeding season for rabbits is late winter and spring. Conceptions will be highest during this season and lowest from the first part of August to the first of November. It is recommended to breed for 4 or 5 litters a year if the does are kept in good condition. The does are bred immediately after their young are weaned at 8 weeks (some breed at 6 weeks). With proper care the productive life of a doe is about 3 years. The practice of breeding does in groups makes it possible to give some of the young from large litters (numbering over 8) to does having smaller litters. This transfer can be made where kindlings are within 3 days of each other.

BREEDING TECHNIQUE

It is the best practice to take the doe to the buck's hutch for breeding because most bucks are slow in performing service in a strange surrounding. Furthermore, the doe would probably resent any buck placed in her hutch and might attack and injure him. If the doe doesn't accept service from the buck within a few minutes, she should be removed and returned later.

At the Purina Research Rabbitry the rabbits are mated and the same pair remated 5 hours later. Because of the possibility of false pregnancy, all does are rebred again on the 18th day.



The following system is used: The doe is always taken to the buck's hutch and released. Enough time is allowed for a natural mating to take place. If the doe runs about the cage, the caretaker simply holds his hand in front of her face to prevent her from running. Sometimes this is all that is necessary. In other cases, the system of forced mating recommended by the United States Rabbit Experimental Station, Fontana, California, is used.

This technique, reported in U. S. D. A. Conservation Bulletin 25, by George S. Templeton, is as follows:

“Occasionally it may be difficult to get a doe to accept service. In such cases it will be necessary to restrain her for mating purposes. To restrain the doe, the right hand is used to hold the ears and a fold of the skin over the shoulders; the left hand is placed under the body and between the hind legs. The thumb is placed on the right side of the vulva, the index finger on the left side, and the skin pushed gently backward. This procedure throws the tail up over the back. The weight of the body is supported by the left hand, and the rear quarters are elevated only to the normal height for service. Bucks accustomed to being handled will not object to such assistance. It is well also to hold the doe in this way the first few times a young buck is used.



The practice will expedite matings and insure ready service in difficult cases. With a little patience and practice the breeder can so develop the technique under this system as to insure almost 100 per cent matings.”

TESTING FOR PREGNANCY

Doe can be tested for satisfactory matings by two common methods.

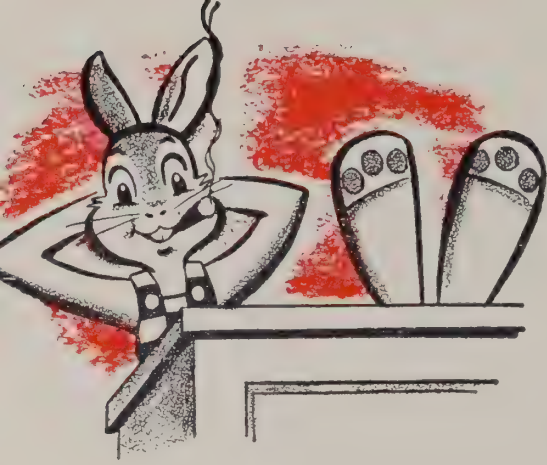
The first is called “test breeding” and consists of taking the doe again to the buck’s hutch 18 days after her first mating. If she refuses service and resists the buck by fighting and “growling” it can be assumed that she is usually pregnant.

The other method for determining pregnancy is by palpation. This method is reliable only in the hands of the experienced individual. The stomach area of the doe is carefully felt and manipulated in an effort to feel the presence of young in the doe’s womb. If no young are discovered, the doe should be returned to the buck for service.

Neither of these methods is 100% accurate, but, by combining the two, your chances for determining successful matings will be better.

BREEDING DIFFICULTIES

Breeding failures can be due to several factors. Examples are: extreme age, molting (during the fall), low vitality, disease, abnormal fat, abnormalities of the reproductive organs (sterility), and false pregnancy. Good breeding results cannot be obtained unless the animals are in a healthy condition.



Chapter VI

GOOD MANAGEMENT

Profits from your rabbits depend largely upon your abilities as a good manager and businessman. Practice the principles of sound management. Run your rabbitry in a businesslike way. You will find it pays.

UP-TO-DATE RECORDS

Your only index for determining if your rabbits are producing profitably is by keeping accurate production records. These records can be kept easily on Purina Hutch Record Cards. By keeping these cards up-to-date, you will be able to trace which individuals or families are making the most money by better health, faster growth, and better-developed frames and carcasses. Hutch record information and pedigrees should be kept in duplicate. Financial records should be kept on all receipts and operating expenses.

Keeping up-to-date records can't be stressed too strongly. It's the only sure way to know if you are making a profit from your rabbitry.

KINDLING TIME

The normal gestation period for a doe is 31 days from the date of mating; however, a doe may vary a day either way and yet kindle a strong, healthy litter.

A nest box filled with clean, dry straw to make a nest should be placed in the doe's hutch 27 days after she

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You can get a book of Purina Hutch Record Cards at no cost through your local Purina Dealer. Space for pedigree information is provided on the back of each card.

is mated. Try to avoid bothering the doe immediately before and after kindling, but see to it that she is kept comfortable and quiet. The litter can be checked after about 2 days to see if they are alive, but unnecessary handling should be avoided.

LITTER SIZE

Normally, does will usually kindle from 6 to 10 young, and in some cases individuals have been known to have as many as 18.

Nature has equipped the doe to satisfactorily nurse a litter of 8 young to a proper weaning weight for the breed standard. This should be a goal that every doe should be made to measure up to. Rabbit profits are reduced considerably by small litters. Avoid this loss by keeping only high-producing does.

Large litters should be reduced to 8 by the time they are 3 days old. Often a doe having a small litter can be made to accept the young from large litters of other does when they are given her. However, they should be about the same age and size of her own litter. Usually a doe can be fooled into thinking the adopted babies are her own if some of her nesting material is rubbed

on the young that are given her. Some does are more sensitive than others. Such does can usually be “out-smarted” by rubbing a little camphor or Vick’s on their noses to prevent them from detecting the foreign odor of the adopted young.

CARE OF LITTERS

The litter can be checked about 2 days after they are born. Any dead, undersized, or deformed young should be removed from the nest and disposed of. Try to avoid any unnecessary handling of young and disturbance of the nest. However, in the event the nest becomes wet, it should be replaced. A clean, dry nest, free from drafts yet adequately ventilated, is essential for successful results. A doe that becomes nervous during the time her nest is examined may often be put at ease by giving her a carrot or like greens.

Baby rabbits are born without hair, and their eyes remain closed until about 10 days. It is usually 3 and sometimes 4 weeks before they try to leave the nest box. Their future lies in the care you give them and the nursing doe. Regular care, plenty of water, and a good feeding program should give them a good growing start in life.



A good rabbit man knows he has the future of this little fellow in his hands. That's why he follows a good rabbit program of management and feeding.

Many breeders weigh their litters at 3 weeks and use this figure as an index for a doe's milking capacity. The young from the meat breeds should weigh between 12 ounces and 1 pound in order to record the doe as a good milk producer. Weighing the litter again at 8 weeks should establish this record. For the meat breeds a litter of 8 should average 3.75 to 4 lbs. live weight at an 8 weeks' weaning.

DOES THAT DESTROY OR DESERT THEIR YOUNG

Occasionally a doe will destroy some or all of her young. It may be her first litter or a later one. In some kindlings, the doe may show signs of nervousness, while in other cases the doe appears and acts normal.

When the does are not disturbed during kindling and a few days later they destroy or desert their young, they should be sold for meat. If the doe is an exceptionally outstanding animal she should be given another opportunity to reproduce and raise a litter. In case she fails the second time it is best to butcher her.

WEANING THE LITTER

The most popular plan followed for weaning rabbits is to allow the litter to run with the doe for 8 weeks; then market the young and rebreed the doe at once. This does away with the necessity of having rearing pens except for the development of the young that are kept for breeding-stock replacements.

Some breeders get an extra litter from their does by breeding the nursing doe when her litter is 6 weeks old and allowing the young to stay with the doe for the full 8 weeks (some wean at 6 weeks). By this system, they get 5 litters from their does each year.

SEPARATION OF YOUNG

Young rabbits chosen for replacements in the breeding herd should be separated by sexes when they are 3 months of age. The bucks should be placed in individual hutches when they are 4 months of age to prevent fighting. The does may be kept, in lots of 10 or 12, in rearing pens until 18 days before they are to be bred. Sometimes it may become necessary to separate the does at an earlier date because of fighting.

PROPER HANDLING

Rabbits should be handled as little as possible. Yet it is advisable to occasionally stroke or put the hand on the young rabbits which are kept for breeders as it helps to accustom them to being handled. They should never be lifted by the ears or legs because handling in this manner may cause injury.

Fryer rabbits or small rabbits may be lifted and carried by grasping the loin region gently, yet firmly, with the heel of the hand toward the tail of the animal. Avoid bruising the flesh or damaging the skin.

Medium-weight rabbits may be lifted and carried by grasping with the right hand the loose skin over the

shoulders, with the back of the rabbit toward the carrier. Place the left hand under the hindquarters so most of the weight will be supported from beneath.

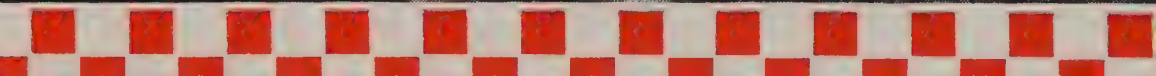
Heavy rabbits may be carried and kept from



struggling by grasping the fold of skin over the shoulders with the right hand, then lifting and holding the rabbit against the left side of the carrier with the animal's head under his left arm.

IDENTIFICATION BY TATTOOING

In order to keep accurate records, it is necessary to use some means of identifying rabbits. Tattooing numbers in the ears is permanent and will not disfigure the animal when properly done. It is customary to use the left ear for tattooing the breeder's private mark. The right ear is saved for tattooing in case the animal is later registered with the American Rabbit and Cavy Breeders Association.





Chapter VII

SANITATION PRACTICES

One of the best protections against disease and parasites is to follow a careful sanitation program. It is a vital point to the success of any rabbitry and can't be stressed too strongly. Preventing an outbreak of disease is, by far, more pleasant than trying to get rid of it from the rabbitry.



Cleaning and disinfecting hutches, nest boxes and feed and water crocks regularly is a good way to help guard against disease.



Several simple rules of sanitation can be carried out to help keep the herd free from disease and infection.

1. Never loan bucks to others.
2. Any new purchases of rabbits for breeders, or animals returning from a show, should be separated from the rabbitry for at least 21 days and carefully observed for any signs of disease.
3. Any sick rabbits and those suspected of having any infection or disease should likewise be separated.
4. Dispose of any rabbit that dies from a known infectious disease quickly, and disinfect all equipment thoroughly. Burn the droppings and bedding of the sick animal.
5. Clean hutches regularly and prevent droppings and moisture from collecting, because they can spread disease.
6. Clean hutch floors daily. Use a stiff brush and Purina Disinfectant Solution (1 tablespoon to one gallon of water).
7. Clean and disinfect nest box before the doe kindles.
8. Scrub feed and water containers every day with hot, soapy water. As an added precaution, immerse them for 10 minutes in a solution of Purina Disinfectant, 1 ounce in 2 gallons of water. Rinse in clear water.



Chapter VIII

FEEDING RABBITS

Proper feeding is the key that unlocks the door for top returns from your rabbits. You cannot receive the full benefit of your rabbits' inheritance of high production and good breed characteristics unless they are fed a well-balanced ration that is palatable and will adequately supply their nutritional needs. Feeding has a strong influence on breeding, fertility, conception, kindling, nursing, growth, and resistance to disease. Feed your rabbits properly for top results in all these life processes.

WHY FEED A COMMERCIAL RATION

In the old days, each rabbit breeder had his own idea of what a rabbit should be fed, and his feeding program was backed more by fancy than by fact. Today, this rather slipshod method of feeding has been replaced by the manufacture of commercial rations. This change has been mainly due to the fact that breeders soon learned that they could not economically buy the many ingredients needed for a balanced ration and that mixing them properly was a job for the experienced technician. With the many advances in nutritional knowledge that are being made today, rabbit feeding is on a highly technical plane.

Purina Research Scientists are constantly studying the problem of rabbit nutrition and are making adjustments in Purina Rabbit Chow as new facts on the nutritional requirements of rabbits are discovered. You can profit from their research by feeding Purina Rabbit Chow according to their instructions.

WHY FEED PURINA RABBIT CHOW

Your desire is to get top returns from your rabbits, and Purina Rabbit Chow is built to help you get results.

Purina Rabbit Chow is made from select, high-quality ingredients which are properly prepared and mixed. Control over the quality of the finished product is maintained by conducting frequent laboratory tests. Actual feeding tests are conducted at the Purina Research Rabbitry as a final test to make sure it is nutritionally adequate for your rabbits. You can depend on Purina Rabbit Chow for its quality and results.

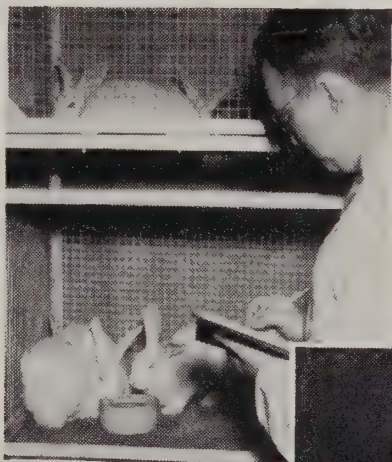
Placing a bowl of Purina Rabbit Chow before your rabbits is all that's needed to supply the nutritional requirements for growth and reproduction.



THE STORY BEHIND PURINA RABBIT CHOW

More than 24 years ago, the Ralston Purina Company established a rabbit unit at the Purina Research Farm for the purpose of determining the nutritional requirements of rabbits. Being the largest maker of animal feeds in the world, the Ralston Purina Company has been able to place its vast facilities and research knowledge at work to build the Purina Rabbit Chow of today. It has been tested by more than 24,000 rabbits at the Purina Research Rabbitry and proven to meet the nutritional needs of rabbits by being fed by the majority of rabbit breeders throughout the country. When you feed Purina Rabbit Chow you will know your rabbits are getting the best feed that Purina Research can build.

A constant check is made in our modern research laboratories to insure the quality of Purina Rabbit Chow.



HOW TO FEED PURINA RABBIT CHOW

The feed requirements for rabbits will vary with the breed, the age, and the life functions of the animal. Proper amounts of Purina Rabbit Chow should be fed to fulfill the animal's particular need and keep it in good physical condition. A close watch should be observed to prevent breeders from becoming too fat, and the amount of feed should be limited when necessary.

Where time is a factor, and for large commercial rabbitries, an easy system must be worked out for feeding that requires a small amount of time. The following feeding schedule has been worked out at the Purina Research Rabbitry, based on the New Zealand breed.

FEEDING SCHEDULE FOR PURINA RABBIT CHOW:

Resting does.....	4 to 6 ounces daily
During gestation.....	6 to 8 “ “
During nursing period until litter is 3 weeks old.....	8 to 16 “ “
Doe and litter of 7 or 8, 3 weeks to weaning (6 to 8 weeks).....	1 to 2 lbs. daily
Growing rabbits after weaning...	4 to 6 ounces daily

Purina Rabbit Chow is a complete ration and supplies all the known nutritional needs of the growing and mature rabbit except water. It is manufactured in a convenient checker (pellet) form which reduces waste and requires less labor for feeding.

Though some rabbit breeders prefer to feed their rabbits twice daily just what they will eat from one feeding to the next, feeding once daily has proved to be the most satisfactory way at the Purina Research

Rabbitry. Whichever way you desire to feed, follow your plan daily.

SPECIAL FEEDING OF NURSING DOES



The doe's ration is reduced to one half the day she kindles. From the second to the seventh day the amount of feed is gradually increased daily. After the first week Purina Rabbit Chow is kept before the nursing doe and her litter at all times until weaning.

DRYING OFF THE DOE

Feeding the doe according to her physical condition will usually dry the doe off normally. However, in cases where a doe does not dry up, she should be given alfalfa hay and one to two ounces of Purina Rabbit Chow. After the swelling of the mammary glands is reduced, feed her according to the feeding schedule.

FEEDING GROWING RABBITS

It has been found that it is better to let the growing rabbit decide how much feed he needs daily for meeting his changing body demands for rapid growth. Therefore, put Purina Rabbit Chow in a self-feeder and keep filled before the young growing rabbits at all times.

WATER

One of the most important factors in a good feeding program, yet so often overlooked, is water. Rabbits can't get the full benefit from their feed unless they are well supplied with clean, fresh water. Keep it available to them at all times.

When freezing temperatures occur, it is a good idea to offer to the rabbits, both morning and evening, water from which the chill has been removed. Empty the crocks before the water freezes.

ADDITIONAL SALT

Purina Rabbit Chow contains enough salt to meet the needs of the average rabbit. However, there are some animals that require more salt than others. An iodized salt spool may be fastened to the wall of the hutch to insure each rabbit of being able to satisfy its own body needs for salt.

FEEDING STATISTICS

When all the factors of the Purina Rabbit Program—Good Breeding—Sound Management—Careful Sanitation—Good Feeding—are properly fulfilled, it is possible to produce, from the meat breeds, litters of 8 rabbits, weaned at 8 weeks of age, that will average 4 lbs. live weight—fed on Purina Rabbit Chow. This is not to be considered a blanket average, for with the many influencing factors, some litters will go under this figure while others will exceed it.

For a good meat-producing breed, such as the New Zealand Whites, your goal should be 4-lb. live weight rabbits weaned at 8 weeks. Following every point of the Purina Program carefully will help you reach this goal.



Chapter IX

PREPARING RABBITS FOR MARKET

A knowledge of the proper way to prepare rabbits for market is valuable to any breeder. For the man who can dress and package rabbit meat attractively, the problem of building a market will be simplified.

Sanitation and efficient handling with the smallest amount of labor should be the main objective in preparing a place for butchering.

For a home slaughter setup, choose a clean location free from flies and dust. Fasten a board horizontally across one wall. Have the board far enough away from the wall so that the carcass may swing free and no blood will touch the pelt. To the board, about 8 inches apart, fasten a line of small meat hooks. A long container should be placed directly underneath to catch the head, blood, and entrails. A butcher's boning knife makes a very satisfactory dressing instrument.

The live weight at which fryer rabbits are marketed depends upon the market demand. Most markets desire a 2-pound dressed rabbit and this takes a 3½- to 4-pound rabbit, live weight, to dress out to this size.

DRESSING A DOMESTIC RABBIT FOR MARKET



1. After killing the rabbit by striking sharply behind the ears with a heavy stick, cut off the head and let the rabbit bleed.



2. Hang the rabbit with hocks a foot apart. Cut the skin around each hock and slit from hock to anus down the inside of each leg.



3. Loosen skin around the hind legs and neck. Then peel the fur over the legs and hindquarters, from the body.



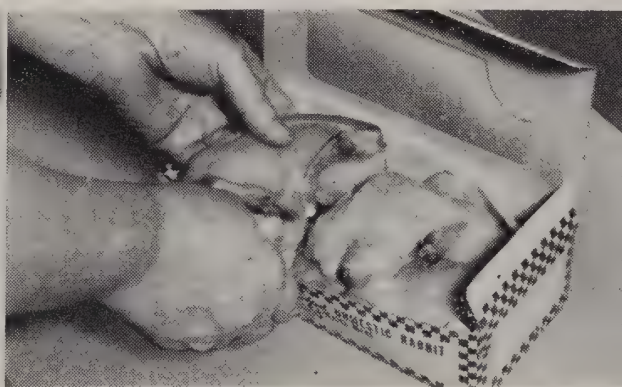
4. Open the carcass down the abdomen, starting near the tail. Cut around the anal opening and between the hind legs. Remove the entrails.



5. Wash the carcass and cut up for the Purina Redi-Fry Carton. Cut along the lines shown on the diagram above.



6. Pieces 1, 2, 3, 4 are the hind legs. Pieces 5, 6, 7 are the back. Pieces 8 and 9 are the shoulders and front legs. The liver, heart and kidneys are also included.



7. Pack carefully in the Purina Redi-Fry Carton. Place pieces 1, 3, 8, 9 on the bottom. Fill empty spaces with the liver, heart, kidneys. Place the meaty pieces—2, 4, 5, 6, 7—on top where they will show.

CARE OF RABBIT PELTS

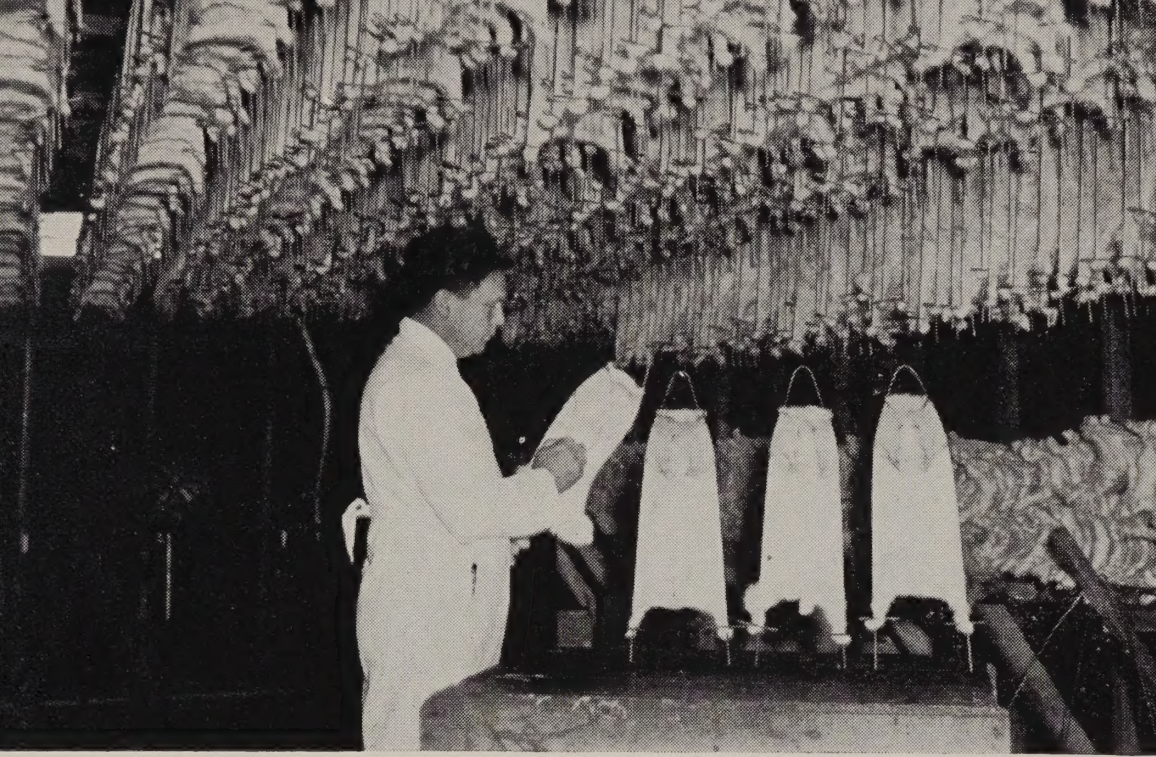
Millions of rabbit pelts are imported into the United States each year because the rabbit industry is unable to supply the demands of the fur and felt trade. This importing will continue to exist as long as so many of our rabbit breeders destroy the pelts from their dressed rabbits. While it would not be profitable to raise rabbits for the skins alone, the skins offer a source of income which should not be overlooked. It is little trouble to save the skins, and the added income helps to make rabbit raising a paying business.

STRETCHING PELTS

After the pelt is removed from the carcass, remove all flesh and fat from the skin with a dull knife, being careful not to cut the skin. Keep the skin "cased" and do not cut it open. Place the pelt while still warm on a wire stretcher, tail end first, and adjust so as to have the four legs on one side of the stretcher and the back straight and even on the other side . . . flesh side out, fur in. Clothespins can be used for drawing the pelt tight over the stretcher. Avoid overstretching the pelt as that will make it too thin and paperlike.

DRYING PELTS

For drying, a screened, cool room should be used. Never dry in the sun as this tends to burn the pelts and lower their quality. The stretched skins should be hung up to dry, leaving a space of 6 to 8 inches between each pelt so the air can be free to circulate. Inspect the pelts the next day for wrinkles, and see that the front legs are pulled out properly. After the pelts have thoroughly dried, they may be removed from their stretchers.



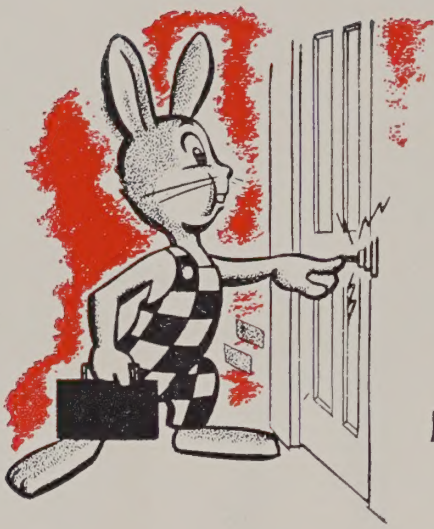
STORAGE OF PELTS

It is better to ship the pelts to market as soon as they are dried. Small rabbitries or clubs should pool their skins in order to make up a worth-while shipment.

Where it is necessary to store the pelts, they may be fastened at the neck in bundles of 50 or more and hung in a cool, dry place away from rodents and flies. Pelts held during warm weather can be protected by sprinkling with naphthalene flakes.

PACKING PELTS FOR SHIPMENT

First, inspect each pelt to make sure it is dry. Avoid packing any moist "green" pelts in with others for they may mold and ruin the entire lot. The pelts should be packed in bales, flat, one skin on another. Sprinkle flakes of naphthalene over each pelt. Wrap the bale with heavy paper and then with burlap, and sew securely. Ship small bales by insured parcel post; bundles of 100 lbs. or more should be shipped by freight or express.



Chapter X

MARKETING YOUR RABBITS

The strength of any business depends upon good, stable markets.

Too many rabbit breeders go into the rabbit business with the thought of raising breeding and show stock as their major market, only to become disappointed later because they couldn't demand the fancy prices necessary for continued production. Building a breeding-stock market takes time, money, and a great deal of "know-how." Furthermore, the prices and demand for fancy breeders are often shaky.

Build your rabbit business on a sound commercial foundation such as that offered by the sale of Domestic Rabbit Meat. Let the receipts from your meat and pelts be your main source of income and your breeding stock the by-product. A rabbitry built on a solid commercial foundation can usually stand the tempest and tides of the trade.

The problem of creating a meat market for rabbit lies in producing and distributing adequate supplies of meat, and the organization of an advertising program. This may be accomplished as an individual breeder or through a cooperative club.

PURINA SALES AIDS FOR MARKETING DOMESTIC RABBIT MEAT

Redi-Fry Cartons



These cartons of modern design are just the thing to boost meat sales. They are attractively printed in color, have a cellophane-window lid, recipes printed on the bottom, and are made of waxed, water-resisting cardboard.

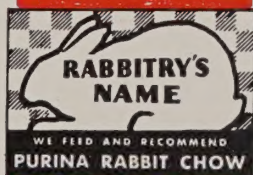
Rabbit Magazine



Checkerboard Rabbit News is published free to Purina Rabbit Chow feeders. It brings you latest news on the management, feeding and marketing of rabbits. Have your Purina Dealer put you on the mailing list now.

All-Metal Rabbitry Sign

Identify your rabbitry with this beautiful red, white and blue 18" x 24" sign. We will im-



print it with the name of your rabbitry. This is a sure way to make your rabbitry known to the public.

Handy Recipe Booklets



Create sales interest with tasty recipes and facts about the value of domestic rabbit

meat. These booklets are a big help in selling because they teach housewives new ways to prepare domestic rabbit meat.

YOUR PURINA DEALER WILL SELL YOU THESE SALES AIDS AT PRODUCTION COSTS. SEE HIM TODAY

The **PURINA PROGRAM**

*Good
Breeding*

*Sound
Management*

*Careful
Sanitation*

*Good
Feeding*

For **PROFITABLE PRODUCTION**